

PRESS RELEASE

FROM: The National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association

CONTACT: Jim Clune
Chief Communications Officer
(800) 628-3233, ext. 249
(206) 774-7249 (Direct)
E-mail: jclune@nationalcasa.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

INDIANA VOLUNTEER AWARDED ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR FOR COMMITMENT TO CHILDREN

On March 20, the National Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Association will honor Frank West, of CASA of Grant County, IN, with the G.F. Bettineski Child Advocate of the Year Award during its 30th annual National CASA conference in Chicago, IL. Each year, National CASA recognizes a volunteer who has made significant contributions to promoting the best interests of abused and neglected children.

West was selected because of his diligent and thorough work as a CASA volunteer and the significant positive impact he has made on children's lives. West not only advocates for their physical well-being, but also ensures that their educational needs are met.

"Frank is a leader in his community, in his CASA program, and in the lives of children," said Leslie Dunn, Indiana State Director, Guardian ad Litem/CASA. "You would have a hard time finding a person more passionate about children and being a CASA volunteer than Frank West."

An example of West's diligence comes from his work with "Kate" (name has been changed for confidentiality purposes). Kate was an older youth who had been shuffled through several foster homes. During these transitions, she often changed schools, and as a result, struggled to keep up with schoolwork. Kate told West she believed she had a mental disability, because she could not think of another reason why her grades were so bad. West petitioned the court to order educational and cognitive tests. The tests confirmed that Kate did not have a mental disability and that she was intelligent and creative. After completing the tests, Kate received assistance to fill in her educational gaps, and is set to graduate high school next spring.



Frank West of Marion will receive
CASA's Advocate of the Year award.

In addition to his work as an advocate, West is an active member of Grant County CASA fundraising committee and often speaks for CASA at community events. He is also a volunteer at the Indiana state Fostering Futures pilot program. To see a short video about Frank West, visit <http://www.childadvocatesnetwork.org/meet-frank-west/>.

“We are incredibly proud of and thankful to each one of our 70,000 CASA volunteers across the country,” said Michael Piraino, CEO of the National CASA Association. “But Frank West truly demonstrates the difference a volunteer can make in the life of a child. He is an inspiration and a superb role model for our national network.”

About National CASA and the G.F. Bettineski Child Advocate Award

In 1977, a Seattle judge conceived the idea of using trained community volunteers to speak for the best interests of these children in court, helping to ensure that they will live in a safe and loving environment. The Seattle program was so successful that judges across the country began utilizing citizen advocates, as well. Now, National CASA and its network of over 1,050 local community program offices work to recruit, train and facilitate volunteers in their work with abused children. National CASA, together with its state and local members, promote and support court-appointed volunteer advocacy for abused and neglected children so that they can thrive in safe, permanent homes.

For more information about Frank West and his award, please contact Jim Clune at (800) 628-3233, Ext. 249; or e-mail Jim at jclune@nationalcasa.org. For more information about the National CASA Association, please view our website at CASAforChildren.org.

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